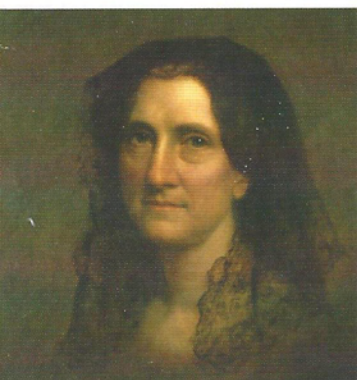


**"A SENSIBLE WOMAN CAN NEVER
BE HAPPY WITH A FOOL"**
THE WOMEN OF GEORGE WASHINGTON'S WORLD



THE FRED W. SMITH
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FOR THE STUDY OF
GEORGE WASHINGTON
AT MOUNT VERNON

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON SYMPOSIUM
November 2-3, 2018

“A SENSIBLE WOMAN CAN NEVER BE HAPPY WITH A FOOL”

THE WOMEN OF GEORGE WASHINGTON’S WORLD

“When the fire is beginning to kindle, and your heart growing warm, propound these questions to it... Is he a man of good character? A man of sense? for be assured a sensible woman can never be happy with a fool.”

Thus wrote George Washington in a heartfelt 1796 letter to his step-granddaughter Eleanor (Nelly) Parke Custis on the subjects of love and marriage. Although the Father of Our Country was a leader among leaders in a male-dominated world, we know that he enjoyed a number of complex and meaningful relationships with women from all stations of the socially-stratified eighteenth century. Join leading historians and academics for an enlightening look at a wide variety of women from the General’s personal orbit, including his often misunderstood mother, an admiring poet, social confidants, a traitor to the Revolution, and a defiant runaway slave. We will also examine the memory of Washington through the legacies of his adoring step-granddaughters and the Southern Matron who led the charge in the 1850s to rescue his home and final resting place.



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2018

1:30–6:00 pm Symposium Registration

Participants are invited to register in the Vaughan Lobby of the Mount Vernon Inn Complex.

2:00 pm

Welcome and Opening Remarks

2:15 pm

Mary Ball Washington: Tales of Motherhood

George Washington's mother left few records. Historians of her son have filled that vacuum with unpleasant portraits of a selfish, controlling, and dissatisfied woman. Evidence of Mary Washington's experiences as a child, wife, and mother helps to dispel many of the pernicious myths that circulate about her. Giving her back her own life not only restores her dignity, but also makes her relationship with her son more interesting, vital, and significant.

Martha Saxton is a professor of history and women's and gender studies at Amherst College. She has undertaken biographies of figures as diverse as 1950s bombshell Jayne Mansfield and nineteenth-century author and reformer Louisa May Alcott. She is the author of *Being Good: Women's Moral Values in Early America* and is currently working on *The Widow Washington* which seeks to share new research on Mary Ball Washington.

3:15 pm

A Rare Commitment: The Friendship of George Washington and Elizabeth Willing Powel

The relationship that developed between George Washington and Elizabeth Willing Powel exemplified eighteenth-century friendships, but was also unique. With vastly different life experiences—Washington a quintessential public figure, Powel confined by her rank and sex to remain outside of the places of power—their friendship surpassed many of the General's relationships. Elizabeth respected and even loved her friend, but didn't cower to him. When she saw him in need of advice or direction, she didn't fear his wrath and gave him the benefit of her brilliant, savvy mind. This lecture explores that friendship and the time and place in which it developed.

George W. Boudreau is a cultural historian of early Anglo-America. From 1996 to 1998, he was site manager and director of programs at the Powel House in Philadelphia's Society Hill Historic District. He is the author of *Independence: A Guide to Historic Philadelphia*. He is currently senior research associate at the McNeil Center for Early American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and is completing work on an edited collection, *Friendship, Comradery, and Entertainment in Anglo-America*.

4:15 pm

Refreshment Break

4:30 pm

A Roundtable on "Women" and "Mothers" across Eighteenth-Century America

A panel of scholars, led by Dr. Karin Wulf, will ask and discuss questions about the diverse ways women experienced womanhood, and mothers

experienced motherhood, across eighteenth-century British America. The four panelists will be thinking about these two categories related to freedom, labor, politics, and other situations in a conversation designed to engage and include the audience and the other symposium presenters.

Karin Wulf is a historian of early America and the early modern Atlantic world; her research focuses on gender, family, and political culture. She is Executive Director of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture and Professor of History at the College of William & Mary. Also, she is a founder and co-chair of William & Mary's Neurodiversity Initiative, supporting neurodiverse students, faculty, and staff, and a co-founder of Women Also Know History, a media and curriculum tool for supporting and advancing the work of women historians.

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| 5:30–6:30 pm | Cocktail Reception in the Vaughn Lobby, Mansion Tours |
| 6:30 pm | Dinner at the Mount Vernon Inn |
| 8:00 pm | Evening Entertainment |



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2018

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| 7:30 am | Continental Breakfast and Historic Document and Object Viewing, Washington Library |
| 8:45 am | Opening Remarks |

9:00 am

True Republicans: The Relationship between George Washington and Mercy Otis Warren

Mercy Otis Warren published political poems and plays, as well as one of the earliest histories of the American Revolution. Through her husband's political activities, Warren became acquainted with George Washington. Although both shared a commitment to the ideas of classical republicanism, including a belief in civic virtue and sacrifice for the common good, their relationship fractured under the weight of party divisions and personal tragedy.

Rosemarie Zagarrri is University Professor and Professor of History at George Mason University and a past President of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic. She is the author of several books, including *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* as well as editor of David Humphreys' "Life of General Washington" with George Washington's "Remarks."

10:00am

George Washington and Phillis Wheatley: The Indispensable Man and the Poet Laureate of the Founding Era

When Phillis Wheatley sent her poem "To His Excellency General Washington" to the newly installed commander of the American forces besieging Boston in October 1775, she created a connection that would have major significance in both their lives. For Washington, taking command at a precarious moment in the War, the connection would be personally edifying and politically useful, and perhaps affected his evolving attitude toward slavery. For Wheatley, it marked her emergence as one of the most ardent and visible American patriots and underscored her role as the unofficial poet laureate of the American Revolution.

James G. Basker is president of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and Richard Gilder Professor of Literary History at Barnard College, Columbia University. He is the author of *Amazing Grace: Poems about Slavery 1660–1810*, *Early American Abolitionists*, and *American Antislavery Writing: Colonial Beginnings to Emancipation*.

11:00 am

Refreshment Break

11:15 am

"The tender Heart of the Chief could not support the Scene": General Washington, Margaret Arnold, and the Treason at West Point

In the fall of 1780, Benedict and Peggy Arnold's plot to turn over West Point—and possibly General George Washington—to the British

failed miserably, forcing Benedict to flee for his life behind British lines and leaving Peggy to face the consequences of their treachery alone. Historians have long debated Peggy's emotional response when Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Marquis de Lafayette showed up at the Arnolds' house the morning the treason was exposed. Gender beliefs about ladies and gentlemen shaped the moment and determined the fate of this most troublesome Loyalist woman.

Charlene Boyer Lewis is Professor of History and Director of American Studies at Kalamazoo College. She is the author of *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860* and, most recently, *Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte: An American Aristocrat in the Early Republic*. Her next project is an examination of Margaret Shippen Arnold, the wife of Benedict Arnold, and American culture in the Revolutionary Era.

12:15–1:30 pm Lunch at the Mount Vernon Inn

1:30 pm ***"She should rather suffer death than return to Slavery":
The Escape of Oney Judge***

In the spring of 1796, one of the most trusted enslaved people in George Washington's presidential mansion stepped out of the house as the family ate their afternoon dinner—and never came back. Several months later, having learned that Oney Judge was in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Washington began negotiating with the young woman over the terms under which she would agree to return. He soon found himself trapped between her desire for freedom, his own sense of fairness, and laws that made it impossible to promise the thing she most desired, without risking a major financial loss.

Mary V. Thompson is a long-time (38 year) member of the staff at Mount Vernon, where she is now the Research Historian. She is the author of *In the Hands of a Good Providence: Religion in the Life of George Washington, A Short Biography of Martha Washington, and The Only Unavoidable Subject of Regret: George Washington, Slavery, and the Enslaved Community at Mount Vernon* (January 2019).

2:30pm ***Daughters of the Pater Patriae: The Custis Step-Granddaughters' Relationships with George Washington***

Martha Washington's granddaughters—Eliza, Martha, and Nelly Custis—formed close ties with George Washington that shaped their lives and careers. While Eliza claimed regularly that she was George Washington's "best loved" child, it was Nelly who had a particularly close relationship with her step-grandfather in her childhood and

young adulthood. Degrees of intimacy aside, all three women spent their adult lives advocating for what they each understood as Washington's political ideals and showcasing their connections to the Father of the Country. Those connections gave them, despite their gender, a powerful claim to political legitimacy.

Cassandra Good is Assistant Professor of History at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia. She is the author of *Founding Friendships: Friendships Between Men and Women in the Early American Republic* and is currently writing a biography of George Washington's family in the nineteenth century.

3:30 pm

Refreshment Break

3:45 pm

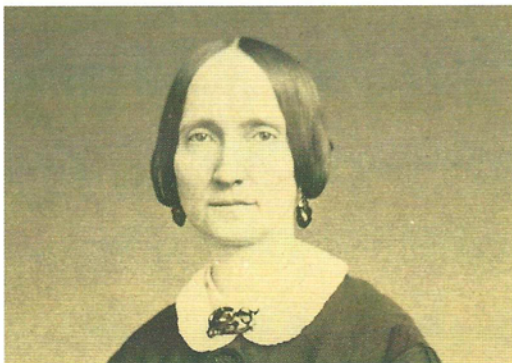
Coming to the Rescue with Ann Pamela Cunningham

In 1853, a frail but plucky woman from upstate South Carolina decided to take on the challenge of rescuing George Washington's dilapidated Mount Vernon estate from the ravages of age and neglect. Rising from her sick bed, she announced to the world that she would sacrifice everything, including her life if necessary, to preserve the home and final resting place of America's greatest hero. This presentation will explore how the indomitable Ann Pamela Cunningham pressed the boundaries of the "lady's sphere," to achieve a patriotic goal of lasting benefit to us all.

Ann Bay Goddin first became interested in Ann Pamela Cunningham in 2000, when she began serving as Mount Vernon's Vice President for Education. She oversaw the development of exhibits and interpretive programs across the estate, expanded outreach to schools, and played an important role in planning the Library. Previously she enjoyed a twenty-five-year career at the Smithsonian, including as Executive Director of the Institution's Center for Education and Museum Studies.

4:45 pm

Symposium Adjourns



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON SYMPOSIUM IS SUPPORTED BY A GENEROUS ENDOWMENT ESTABLISHED BY THE BARRA FOUNDATION.

Location: Robert H. and Clarice Smith Auditorium, located in the Mount Vernon Inn Complex. Please park in the west visitor parking lot.

Fees: \$200 (\$175 for members). Single-day fees are not available.

Lodging: The Washington Library has a preferred rate with Hampton Inn & Suites Mt. Vernon/Belvoir-Alexandria, the closest hotel to Mount Vernon, 703.619.7026.

Space is limited - Please respond early.

This is a ticketless event. Your name will be on a reservation list at the door.

For additional information, please call 703.799.8686 or visit
mountvernon.org/gwsymposium

Images:

Martha Washington: *Martha Washington* by James Peale, watercolor on ivory, 1796. Bequest of Margaret B. Smith, to the memory of Henrietta Elizabeth Smith, Grandniece of Martha Washington, Daughter of Commodore John Dandridge Henley, and Wife of J. Bayard H. Smith, Esq., 1910 [W-624]. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

Mercy Otis Warren: *Mrs. James Warren (Mercy Otis)* by John Singleton Copley, oil on canvas, 1763. Bequest of Winslow Warren [31.212]. Photograph © 2018 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Phillis Wheatley: *Phillis Wheatley* by unidentified artist, engraving on paper, 1773.
Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Eliza Parke Custis: *Eliza Parke Custis Law*, by Sarah Miriam Peale, oil on canvas, c. 1836. Purchased with funds provided by Melody Sawyer Richardson, Vice Regent for Ohio, 2008 [H-4833]. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

Eleanor Parke Custis: *Eleanor Parke Custis*, by James Sharples, pastel on laid paper, c. 1796.
Purchase, 1974 [W-2645/A-B]. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

Ann Pamela Cunningham: *Ann Pamela Cunningham*, by James Reid Lambdin, oil on canvas, c. 1860. Purchase, 1860. Conservation courtesy of The Founders, Washington Committee Endowment Fund [M-405]. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

Mary Ball Washington: *Spurious portrait of Mary Ball Washington - Mary Ball Washington at the Age of About Four-score*, by Robert Edge Pine, photomechanical print copy ca. 1916. [LC-USZC4-7247]. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

Elizabeth Willing Powel: *Portrait of Mrs. Samuel Powel (née Elizabeth Willing)* by Matthew Pratt, oil on canvas, 1769-1770. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with the George W. Elkins Fund, E1973-1-1.

Peggy Shippen Arnold: *Portrait of Margaret Shippen (Mrs. Benedict Arnold)* by John Andre, graphite, 1778. Yale University Art Gallery, Purchase [1938.96].

Martha Parke Custis Peter: *Martha Parke Custis* by Robert Edge Pine, oil on canvas, 1785.
Purchase, 1951 [W-1616]. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

Ann Pamela Cunningham: *Ann Pamela Cunningham*, photograph by Broadbent & Co., Philadelphia, c. 1859 [RP-1281 ; Photo-5762-C2]. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

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